

Clark County EIS Comprehensive Plan Update

September 2002 Public Workshops

Summary of Response

October 2002

OVERVIEW

From September 9-19, 2002, Clark County hosted five public workshops for the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan Update. This was the second round of meetings held in 2002; the information presented at these meetings reflected public feedback on the draft evaluation criteria that was collected in the first round of meetings in April. The September workshops were designed to: 1) Inform the public about the progress of the Clark County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan update; and 2) Gather participants' thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed land use alternatives being considered in the draft Environmental Impact Statement. Approximately 300 people attended the five meetings. The number of people who signed in at the meetings ranged from 43 in Camas to 78 in Orchards.

The meetings were publicized in a variety of ways. A letter from the Board of County Commissioners was mailed to a database of interested citizens (including everyone who had attended the April 2002 meetings). Other methods of publicity included: news releases, newspaper advertisements, the Clark County website and displays at libraries throughout the county.

The area gatherings were held at the following locations on these dates:

- Camas – Skyridge Middle School - Monday, September 9
- La Center - La Center High School – Tuesday, September 10
- Battle Ground – Columbia Adventist Academy – Thursday, September 12
- Vancouver (Salmon Creek) - Chinook Elementary School – Tuesday, September 17
- Vancouver (Orchards) – NW Regional Training Center – Thursday, September 19

STRUCTURE

Each community meeting consisted of an hour-long open house, followed by a public workshop, consisting of a brief 15-minute presentation and then small group break-outs with staff presentations given for each of the five Draft Land Use Alternatives. The meetings concluded with individual staff summaries of the presentations and a brief question and answer period. Citizens attending the open house portion of each meeting toured displays at six stations manned by county staff and consultants. The stations included the following topics:

1. Sign-in/orientation
2. Background and decision process
3. Five Alternatives and comparison

4. Environmental/salmon issues
5. Transportation/congestion issues
6. Jobs (focused public investment)

The workshops began with a brief presentation by Pat Lee, Clark County Long Range Planning Director. An explanation was provided of the work that had taken place by county staff and consultants since the April meetings. The objectives of the meeting were explained and then participants were divided into small groups for staff presentations.

Participants of the small group discussions were distributed to five different stations and given 12-15-minute presentations on each of the five Draft Land Use Alternatives, followed by a brief discussion period. Staff members rotated from station to station with their displays, which allowed each group to remain in the same location.

TOP CRITERIA

At the April 2002 meetings, the following responses were most commonly heard when participants selected the most important land use criteria.

1. **Provides more jobs** – Family wage jobs, environmentally-friendly jobs, sufficient land for industry, businesses with a higher density of employment, streamlined permitting process
2. **Reduces traffic congestion** – Improves traffic patterns, develops a better quality road system
3. **Is supported by community input** – Reflected in the ongoing citizen participation effort for this process.
4. **Protects the environment** – Preserves/adds open space, watershed buffers, protects viable agricultural and forest lands

Based on this feedback, participants at the September 2002 meetings were asked to evaluate the five Draft Land Use Alternatives according to how well each one met the above criteria (with the exception of number Three, since community input was the purpose of the meetings).

Participants were given a comment form that asked “At this point, with the information you have, how well do you believe this alternative meets these criteria?” and then asked to check the appropriate box for *Very Well*, *Well*, *Neutral/Don’t Know*, *Somewhat* or *Not At All*. There were spaces to add other criteria and for open ended comments. Participants were also asked how well each Alternative meets the criteria by staff members during the presentations.

Table 1, which is attached to this summary report, summarizes the responses to the comment forms for each of the five Draft Land Use Alternatives at each of the five meeting locations.

EVALUATION OF THE FIVE ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: The 1994 Plan

Reflects the same policies as the plan adopted in 1994. Current patterns of residential development would continue. Annual population increases of 1.83 percent would determine plans and projections for new jobs.

Overall, there was an impression that this Alternative doesn't do enough to protect the environment or reduce traffic congestion, and only somewhat provides more jobs. This was particularly pronounced at the Salmon Creek and Orchards meetings, which probably reflects the reaction to the recent growth in both areas. There was a general feeling expressed that Alternative 1 encourages more housing growth than is necessary and doesn't provide the jobs/tax base to support the additional growth. There seemed to be an even split between the people who see the higher growth rate as being more realistic and those who don't want to see the county growing any faster. There were also concerns about inadequate roads, scattered growth, and compatibility issues for adjacent land uses

Frequent Comments:

Jobs

- Too much land is allocated to housing – not enough jobs to support it
- People will still go to Oregon to work
- Jobs per acre figure is too low

Transportation

- Any growth at this rate will exacerbate traffic problems
- Requires additional feeder roads for already congested arterials

Environment

- Eats up too much rural land/viable agricultural lands

Other

- Encourages too much sprawl
- Moves us closer to being a Portland bedroom community
- Will harm our quality of life
- Too much UGB expansion
- Too costly to provide this much infrastructure
- This is the worst plan of the bunch

However:

- This growth rate is more realistic to historical trends
- Provides better opportunities for additional, affordable housing

Alternative 2: The Commissioners' 2001 Approach

Illustrates guidelines established by the Board of County Commissioners in April 2001. Key features include the annual 1.5 percent increase in population and a new housing mix of 75 percent single-family and 25 percent multi-family. Under this alternative, more land would be available to add new jobs, compared with recent years.

There was a general feeling that this is the “in-between” Alternative – between no movement of the UGA and too much growth. There was a slight preference for how well this Alternative provides for jobs, with many respondents expressing the desire to see the additional growth accommodate job

creation rather than additional housing. Some felt the job growth rate should be higher than the 43,000. There were some concerns by the public that the business park locations were in odd places (on top of residential areas or away from major roads). The title of this alternative caused a little confusion – that the commissioners are pushing this option ahead of the others.

Frequent Comments:

Jobs

- Need more job growth to support the residential areas and tax base
- Business park growth is better than only concentrating on industrial growth
- Need more realistic picture of jobs/acre (too low)

Transportation

- Might make traffic worse

Environment

- (No particular frequent comments made)

Other

- No need for this much residential growth
- Expensive to accommodate this much growth – who pays?
- Uses up too much open land and doesn't do enough to provide for the infrastructure

Alternative 3: No Expansion of Existing Urban Areas

Focuses on developing land within current urban growth areas to its full potential under current policies. Business expansion and development would occur on land already intended for industrial uses. Land already targeted for residential use would accommodate more homes than previously projected. Urban growth areas would not expand.

Overall, this Alternative resonated with many people as providing a realistic approach by using up existing lands first before expanding. Many felt that this option would better protect the environment and rural lands than the other Alternatives. There seemed to be a split whether or not enough jobs would be accommodated under this approach, with some people preferring the business parks and higher density, while other people wanting to see more job growth and a more even distribution of jobs around the County. Many felt that this alternative doesn't offer enough large parcels of land for jobs, especially larger industries with family wage jobs. They would like to see this Alternative with expansion for jobs. Another frequent comment was that this alternative would increase traffic congestion – a split with those who thought that trade-off was ok because it would encourage public transit vs. those who did not want to see increased traffic congestion.

Frequent Comments:

Jobs

- Unsure if this Alternative can accommodate enough jobs
- Uncertainty if there is enough industrial land (large parcels) for new industry
- Does not distribute jobs throughout the county, although jobs will be closer to residential areas

Transportation

- Better for public transit
- Creates more density that may exacerbate traffic problems and air pollution

Environment

- Best Alternative for the environment and quality of life

- Preserves rural lands

Other

- This is the best Alternative
- Infrastructure already in place, makes new growth more affordable
- Least amount of sprawl/discourages sprawl
- Uses up existing lands before adding new UGB area
- Keeps new land uses consistent with existing uses

However:

- Concern about rising costs of land for homes and businesses with the higher density
- No expansion doesn't make sense given recent growth history

Alternative 4: The Cities' Perspective

Displays proposals for maintaining or adjusting urban growth boundaries from Battle Ground, Camas, La Center, Ridgefield, Vancouver, Washougal, and Yacolt. City perspectives would determine where and how we plan for new jobs and new homes. Planning for jobs would be greater than in Alternatives 1, 2, and 3. More land for business would be concentrated between Battle Ground and Vancouver and between Northeast 50th and 172nd avenues.

This Alternative was largely seen to be better at providing for jobs than the previous Alternatives. Some people thought this alternative would encourage more traffic congestion and many felt that more jobs should be located within the UGA's. Many had problems with Battle Ground's proposed expansion, particularly because of environmental and traffic concerns (the East Fork of the Lewis River and Salmon Creek were mentioned frequently) as well as the viability of Battle Ground as home for new industry. The placement of industrial and business park zones away from the major transportation corridors was also questioned, although it was recognized that most people prefer to work close to where they live. "Where is all the housing? Is it just supposed to be infill?" was a common question.

Frequent Comments:

Jobs

- Provides for more jobs and businesses
- Disperses jobs throughout the county, which is good
- Provides more jobs around the cities and nearer where people live
- Battle Ground not a logical place for large job growth – too far removed

Transportation

- Would cause too many traffic problems
- Too much UGB growth away from major arterials

Environment

- Concern that critical areas will not be adequately protected
- Unnecessary growth into sensitive areas
- Concern about the Lewis River and Salmon Creek

Other

- Takes up too much land
- Would like to see a buffer between Vancouver and Battle Ground – too much growth proposed for Battle Ground
- Concern about the ability to provide the amount of infrastructure needed to accommodate the growth

- Too focused on city wants when this is a countywide plan

Alternative 5: The “Discovery Corridor” Strategy

Aims to increase the number of businesses and family-wage jobs located along I-5 in the Discovery Corridor, a proposed center of economic activity. New homes and jobs are projected at levels comparable with Alternative 4. Residential growth would continue within UGA's. However, planning for new jobs would focus on areas from Salmon Creek to La Center.

This Alternative enjoyed the strongest support of the five for providing jobs. Many of the respondents seemed to prefer the options that the Discovery Corridor provides for expanding industry, channeling job growth, addressing infrastructure needs and optimizing mass transit potential. There was some concern expressed about how the growth might impact I-5 congestion and whether it made sense to direct job growth away from existing centers of housing. The feasibility of attracting high wage jobs there was also a concern. Many expressed the desire to see this Alternative only in conjunction with transportation and transit improvements. Many wanted to see more studies done. There was also a feeling that the proposal didn't do enough for the cities away from the I-5 corridor.

Frequent Comments:

Jobs

- Good at locating new jobs in a logical place
- Good for large employers needing large parcels

Transportation

- Reduces the commute into Portland
- Concern about increasing I-5 congestion north of Vancouver
- May increase traffic problems since jobs would be located away from existing housing areas
- Best option for utilizing mass transit

Environment

- Concern about impacts of more air pollution
- Somewhat less impact to the environment than other Alternatives
- Would like to see buffers

Other

- Doesn't do as much for east county
- Cheaper to service and provide infrastructure

MEETING CHARACTERISTICS & DISTINCTIONS

La Center (52 people signed in)

- Need more job growth in La Center while retaining the rural atmosphere
- Need economic development opportunities through connection at I-5 junction

Battle Ground (66 people signed in)

- Concern that Meadow Glade will be overwhelmed by development if Battle Ground UGB expands there

- Protect Salmon Creek and the Lewis River

The issues raised at these meetings reflect similar issues and concerns that have been outlined in this report:

Camas (43 people signed in)

Vancouver - Salmon Creek (60 people signed in)

Vancouver - Orchards (78 people signed in)

COMMON QUESTIONS/ISSUES THAT EMERGED

The Process

- How are we supposed to make these distinctions without the data to back up the impacts that would occur with additional growth?
- In all the plans, it is impossible to make an intelligent comment on traffic, jobs and the environment.
- None of the plans use a realistic growth rate
- Why was there not an Alternative 6 that models our existing growth rate?
- Not much support for the market factor

Land Use

- Concern about the placement of industrial areas over/near existing neighborhoods
- How are you going to maintain continuity of land uses as the county grows (compatibility with neighborhoods)?

Jobs

- How are you going to ensure that any new jobs are “family wage”?
- Concern about industrial areas being placed away from transportation corridors
- Like the idea of business parks
- Concern that the jobs per acre figure is too low
- Would like to see more job creation along I-5 and I-205

Environment

- How are these plans addressing wetlands issues?
- Need to protect critical areas first before allowing any new growth

Other

- If density is increased, there needs to be a commitment to adding parks in urban areas and protecting open space in rural areas.
- Concern that schools may become even more overburdened
- Would like to see parks and open space addressed

CONCLUSION

Overall responses at the meetings demonstrated a wide diversity of opinion about how growth should be managed in Clark County with some common themes emerging. A majority of people prefer UGB expansion if it accommodates job growth, not just housing. They like to see the job growth being concentrated along major corridors like I-5 and I-205. There was a desire to enable people to live close to where they work to reduce traffic and environmental problems. There was a widespread concern that traffic may get worse with any UGB expansion and that the plans under consideration are not adequately addressing traffic issues. Many people had questions about the type of new jobs being considered (high wage versus low paying service jobs), how they would be recruited and whether the jobs would be for existing county residents or new residents. There was also some concern about the ability to pay for the infrastructure that new growth will require.